

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
SMS-01 IO-13 /090 W  
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R 082001Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7145  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
USMISSION USNATO  
USLO PEKING  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
AMEMBASSY BERN  
USMISSION USUN  
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DIA WASHDC  
USNMR SHAPE  
CINCEUR

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. LL652: GDS

TAGS: FR, US

SUBJECT: FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS BEGIN TO IMPROVE

REF: PARIS 17181

1. SUMMARY: FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS, WHICH REACHED A LOW POINT LAST SPRING, ARE PREDICTABLY BEGINNING TO PICK UP AGAIN. RECENT POSITIVE INDICATIONS INCLUDE SUCCESSFUL BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON AFRICA, THE PUBLIC FRENCH POSITION ON THE TASS COMPUTER SALE, AND A VISIT TO FRANCE BY A SOVIET MIG SQUADRON COMMEMORATING WARTIME COOPERATION. GROMYKO'S VISIT HERE LATER THIS FALL WILL PERMIT A BROADER EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND COULD BRING MORE SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS. END SUMMARY.

2. LAST SPRING WE REPORTED THAT FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS HAD REACHED THEIR LOWEST POINT SINCE DEGAULLE INITIATED DETENTE (REFTEL). WE NOTED AT THAT TIME THAT BOTH FRANCE AND THE USSR HAVE AN INTEREST IN GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND THAT THIS WOULD LIKELY LEAD  
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THEM TO PATCH THINGS UP. OVER THE SUMMER, THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS THAT THE PREDICTABLE EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WAS ALREADY BEGINNING:

-- FRANCO-SOVIET CONSULTATIONS AUGUST 9-10 ON AFRICA HELPED TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF THE BITTERNESS WHICH BOTH SIDES FELT FOLLOWING THE SHABA INTERVENTION AND SOVIET CRITICISM OF IT. THESE CONSULTATIONS, ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY THE SOVIETS ABOUT A YEAR AGO, WERE AT FIRST AGREED TO ONLY RELUCTANTLY BY THE FRENCH. THEY WERE SCHEDULED FOR LAST WINTER BUT PUT OFF BECAUSE OF OFFENSIVE SOVIET BEHAVIOR IN THE HORN. GISCARD REVIVED THE IDEA IN A LETTER TO BREZHNEV AFTER SHABA;

-- THE PUBLIC FRENCH STATEMENT AUGUST 16 OF THEIR POSITION ON OUR REQUEST NOT TO SELL TASS THE COMPUTER WE WERE REFUSING WAS WELCOMED BY THE SOVIETS AND RECALLED THE OLD "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN PARIS AND MOSCOW. IT ALSO PUT ENOUGH DAYLIGHT BETWEEN THE US AND FRENCH ATTITUDES ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO GIVE THE SOVIETS CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION;

-- THE LONG-PLANNED VISIT TO REIMS AIRBASE SEPT. 4-8 OF SIX SOVIET MIG-23S ADDED A MILITARY DIMENSION, AND RETURNED LAST YEAR'S VISIT BY A FRENCH SQUADRON TO THE USSR TO COMMEMORATE SERVICE BY FRENCH PILOTS ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING WORLD WAR TWO.

3. THESE EVENTS ARE PROBABLY ONLY A BEGINNING, AND WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE MORE EXAMPLES OF IMPROVED FRANCO-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE MONTHS TO COME. GROMYKO'S VISIT TO PARIS IN LATE OCTOBER OR EARLY NOVEMBER WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW OF ISSUES. WHILE THE FRENCH WILL BE FIRM ON ISSUES OF

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IMPORTANCE TO THEM, THEY (AND, WE SUSPECT, THE SOVIETS AS WELL) WILL BE LOOKING FOR MARGINAL ITEMS ON WHICH THEY CAN BE MORE FORTHCOMING, IN ORDER TO GIVE SOME IMPETUS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS. AFRICA, CHINA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE FRENCH DISARMAMENT PROPOSALS ARE LIKELY TO BE PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION.

4. BOTH THE FRENCH AND THE SOVIETS EVIDENTLY BELIEVE THAT THEIR OWN "TOUGH" POLICIES ON AFRICA CAUSED THE OTHER PARTY TO PULL BACK FROM AN EXTREME POSITION. QUAI AFRICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR GEORGY CLEARLY REFLECTED THIS VIEW WHEN DEBRIEFING US ON HIS CONSULTATIONS IN MOSCOW. HE THOUGHT DECISIVE FRENCH ACTION ON SHABA AND WILLINGNESS TO GIVE MILITARY HELP TO ITS BE-LEAGUERED FRIENDS IN AFRICA HAD BROUGHT THE SOVIETS TO A MORE MELLOW ATTITUDE. (THE FRENCH ALSO THINK THEY MAY HAVE PERSUADED THE SOVIETS TO PUT PRESSURE ON LIBYA TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS FROM CHAD.) THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE EVIDENTLY BELIEVES THE FRENCH GOT COLD FEET WHEN MOSCOW WARNED THEM SHARPLY ABOUT SHABA, AND THAT THIS WAS WHY THE FRENCH REVIVED THE IDEA OF CONSULTATIONS ON AFRICA. THERE IS PROBABLY SOME TRUTH IN BOTH THESE VERSIONS, AND NO DOUBT EACH SIDE'S RATIONALE HAS HELPED IT TO REOPEN THE DIALOGUE.

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6. IF GISCARD NEEDED ANY REMINDER OF HOW IMPORTANT GOOD RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW ARE TO MAINTAINING THE DOMESTIC IMAGE OF AN "INDEPENDENT" FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY, HE GOT IT ON AUGUST 25, WHEN HIS GAULLIST RIVAL, PARIS MAYOR JACQUES CHIRAC, INVITED THE MAYOR OF MOSCOW (AS WELL AS NY MAYOR KOCH AND MAYORS FROM THE UK, BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS AND POLAND) TO HELP HIM COMMEMORATE THE LIBERATION OF PARIS. CHIRAC HAS AGREED TO A RETURN TRIP TO MOSCOW, WHICH WILL GIVE HIM FURTHER AMMUNITION FOR CRITICIZING GISCARD'S POLICIES TOWARD THE USSR. (CHIRAC WILL ALSO VISIT CHINA, STARTING NEXT WEEK, AND THE US.)  
HARTMAN

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## Message Attributes

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